

Grunston. Grapevine

December 2016



FROM THE DIRECTOR:

IT IS DECEMBER 21ST, a few days before Christmas, and this time next week the Stroh family will be in Orlando, Florida, at Disney World.

My wife Celeste, who is a native Floridian, recalls visiting Disney World as a child the first year it opened, but this trip will be the first journey to Disney for our daughters, Rebecca and Rachel, who will turn 8 and 11 years old respectively this month.

As such, for the better part of the last ten months we have been planning, the excitement has been building, and the girls have been trying to figure out how to accomplish everything they want to do in a mere four days. They have also been trying to figure out how to buy every conceivable souvenir featuring their favorite Disney characters, but that is another story!

Honestly, Disney would not be my first choice for a family vacation, although the forecasted 80 degree weather in the Sunshine State sounds awesome about now. I am not a fan of roller coasters, the logistics all seem a bit overwhelming and stressful, and I also worry about meeting the expectations of two still fairly young girls who have spent months building enthusiasm for something that is sure to be amazing.

What if it rains, what if we don't find Simba, Elsa, or Sleeping Beauty in character, what about traffic, and is somebody getting a cold before we go? Plus, how will we ever be able to do everything on the still growing of list of "must do's" and still find time to sleep? All of this and countless other thoughts have been tugging at my heart and mind as the packing begins.

As you can also probably imagine, personally I prefer the authenticity of historic sites, parks, and natural areas to what some may consider the contrived and imaginary worlds of Disney. But if I am perfectly honest with my-

self, and as I am eager to discover next week, there is an authenticity associated with the Disney experience and there is much those of us at historic sites can learn from Disney.



The heart and soul of this authenticity is service.

In reading *Be Our Guest*:

Perfecting the Art of Customer Service, published by the Disney Institute, you learn about concepts such as the magic of service, defining your service theme, the magic of setting, creating a first impression, the importance of language, guestology, and a host of other ideas that all contribute to making what Disney defines so well as magic. But what we learn in reading this book and examining Disney is that this magic is not magical, it is intentional.

Equally important, being intentional as we work to create a magical experience is more about creating a feeling of magic, of wow, and of connection that is authentic, than it is about tricking or fooling somebody into seeing something that is not real.

The experience itself, the magic, is what creates an authenticity of feeling that is pervasive and found at every level of the Disney experience. Even the correspondence we have received for the last ten months has been designed to reinforce the values and magic of Disney. Some of this is born of branding, but is mostly experiential and it is all intentional.

But as I think about Disney I am most impressed and inspired by the concept of imagination. In reading *Be Our Guest* I learned that Walt Disney coined the phrase "Imagineering." In doing so he wrote, "There's really no secret about our approach. We keep moving forward—opening new doors and doing new things—because we are curious. And curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.

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On the Cover

Christmastide at Gunston Hall: on a chilly Dec. 10 evening, visitors were welcomed by a warming bonfire, and a lantern-lit path to the mansion.

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We are always exploring and experimenting... we call it Imagineering—the blending of creative imagination and technical know-how.” Born out of this process were ten rules for creating the Disney experience. These rules included concepts such as:

- Know your audience
- Wear your guest’s shoes
- Organize the flow of people of ideas
- Create a visual magnet
- Communicate with visual literacy
- Avoid over-load
- Tell one story at a time
- Maintain identity
- For every ounce of treatment provide a ton of treat
- Keep it up

What is amazing about all of these concepts is their applicability to our work at Gunston Hall. We want to create a magical experience for our guests founded on the distinctive features of our particular story and place. We want to spark curiosity and engage one’s imagination as we try to recreate Mason’s world and explore the relevancy of his ideas. We want our setting to contribute to this experience through visual literacy and identity, and we want to provide a level of service that is exemplary. We also want to create connections between families and people by providing something that is memorable, compelling, and enriching.

In truth, our mission is very different than Disney’s mission. We are a historic site, and they are a theme park. We tell stories based on historical fact and context, while they largely focus on creating fictional worlds, albeit with a strong connection to real world settings. But in many other

ways we are the same. While our authenticity is based on a historic mansion where real people lived and their authenticity is based on a sense of unparalleled magic, the root of all we both strive to achieve is found in a common connection to people and experience. This common connection includes feelings, emotions, and yes, the creation of a little bit of magic.

In closing, I am sincerely thrilled and excited about our upcoming trip to Disney. I will have fun and the family will enjoy a very memorable experience—of that I have no doubt. And, I will love even more seeing the girls awestruck at the “magic” found at Disney. I will also return reinvigorated in my quest for sharing the magic of Gunston Hall. I will also be thinking about magic in new ways as part of this quest. I encourage you all to do the same. Find the magic and open new doors in our shared journey to tell the story of George Mason and the Virginia Declaration of Rights. All it takes is a little creative imagination and technical know-how—enjoy the quest!

Thank you and best wishes for a blessed and safe holiday season! 🐉

Scott

Scott Muir Stroh III
Executive Director



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.

It's Done!

For months, the talented conservation crew at Black Creek Workshop L.L.C. have been chipping, scraping, restoring, and carefully repainting all the exterior wood work on the mansion. Their work was completed just in time for our visitors coming to our Christmastide event.



NEW FACES

Newly Minted Docents Complete Training and Begin Working with School Tours

After completing 11 days of comprehensive training, six new docents have joined the Gunston Hall Docents' Association and have started taking school field trip groups on tours.

Docents studied topics ranging from George Mason's life to 18th century politics to clothing to dining customs and practiced the art of sharing that knowledge with children. After training was completed on Nov. 2, the new docents were required to shadow tours given by experienced docents, then they began to give tours where they were shadowed and evaluated by docent trainers and Gunston Hall staff.

Before joining the docent corps, Nyla Carney spent 40 years as a college teacher and associate dean at Marymount University. She taught linguistics, Spanish, and French. She was born in Lawrence, Kansas, but has lived the last 40 years in Virginia. Her hobbies include horseback riding, fox hunting, singing, playing bridge, and reading.


Catherine Conley is a recently retired school librarian. Born in Cincinnati, she lived in Naples, Italy, and now Alexandria. She has been married 34 years and has two grown daughters. She says, "I love to learn new things, I love fancy stuff, I like to see and know how things are made." One final disclosure, "I don't like to clean."

Linda Geoly has been volunteering as a researcher in the Gunston Hall library for over a year. Before that, she was a law librarian and archivist at the U.S. Court of Appeals and U.S. Sentencing Commission. "I enjoy meeting new people and trying new activities. I love to teach. I spend lots of time outdoors—walking, hiking, and boating."

Mary Grant has been a teacher, seamstress, and organizer. She came to Virginia via Oregon, Washington, and Cincinnati. She has three children and two dogs. "I am very positive and happy. I try to live life in a joyful, kind way, and I love to learn and explore."

Beth Ridpath is a former teacher and administrator. She was born in Chicago, but as an Army daughter, then an Army wife she lived in many locations before settling in Fairfax County. She has three

sons, two daughters, and seven grandchildren. "I'm a person who tries to do 'My Personal Best.'"

Retired physician Corbin Eissler is the final new docent, but ill health has postponed his certification. He will be featured in our next issue. 



Above, new docents Nyla Carney, Linda Geoly, Catherine Conley, and Mary Grant gather for a graduation picture in the Visitors' Center courtyard. Right, another rookie docent, Beth Ridpath outside the schoolhouse. Not pictured, new docent Corbin Eissler.

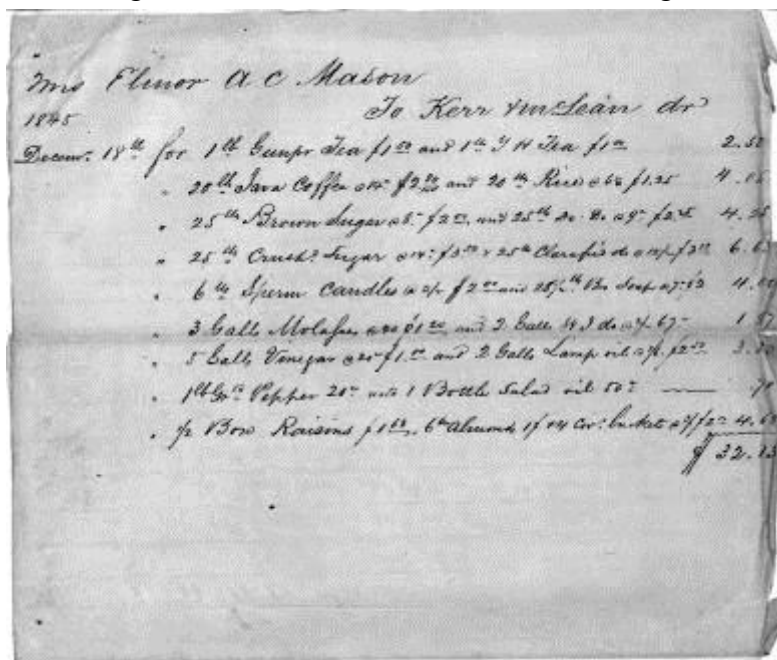


By early December, the new docents were already in the field with school groups. Above, in the herb garden, Catherine Conley shares some fragrant southernwood with fourth graders from Loudoun County's Forest Grove Elementary School.

ELEANOR MASON'S CHRISTMAS GROCERY LIST 1845

By Jerry Foster, Archaeological Volunteer
(Reworking of a Grapevine article from 2011.)

ON DECEMBER 18, 1845, the grocery firm of Kerr & McLean in Alexandria, Virginia, sent the goods listed on the invoice (see illustration) to Eleanor Mason widow of George Mason VI. Eleanor possessed Gunston Hall and resided there as her widow's dower right.



The first item is Gunpowder tea, and it's interesting that the Lincolns were, contemporaneously in 1845, ordering Gunpowder tea from the firm of John Irwin & Company in Springfield, Illinois¹; earlier, in 1830, James Madison requested it for Montpelier from William Allen in Fredericksburg.²

In Parson Mason Locke Weem's (who occasionally took services at Pohick Church until 1817), possibly apocryphal, account, even George Washington made reference to Gunpowder tea when he employed it in a double entendre with Lord Fairfax. Washington stated his agent in London informed him a shipment of "Gunpowder Tea" was heading for Boston

in 1773. When Fairfax asked for clarification, the reply was "it will prove inflammable, and produce an explosion that will shake both countries."³

Young Hyson tea (Y.H. on the invoice), was a documented victim of the "Mohawk Indians" in Boston harbor on the evening of December 16, 1773. The Boston Tea Party managed to dump 15 crates of Hyson into the harbor.⁴

Tea and other commodities remind us of Alexandria's status as a port. Further proof of this is the importing of spermaceti candles, another item on Eleanor's list. It's likely these came from Nantucket which had in 1843 "the largest output of refined oil and sperm candles of any American community."⁵

Spermaceti candles "...are smooth, with a fine gloss, almost semi-transparent, and of a silvery white, while those of wax have always a slight tint of yellow. When genuine, drops of spermaceti leave no stain. They are cheaper than the best wax."⁶ From the same source

"...it burns with a clear white flame, superior to that of tallow, and without any disagreeable odour."


Continuing down Eleanor's list, with the slim evidence presented, it's necessary to speculate regarding what Christmas dishes may have incorporated these ingredients: brown sugar, molasses, raisins, almonds, and black pepper.

Mary Randolph's *The Virginia Housewife* (1824 and many subsequent editions) provides some clues: brown sugar and molasses, combined with ingredients already on hand, would result in ginger bread; brown sugar, raisins,

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and black pepper, also with ingredients already stored, would create mince meat; raisins, sugar, and almonds, mixed with already-present goods would have resulted in Mary Randolph's "Rich Fruit Cake."

Unfortunately, we don't know at this juncture how Eleanor celebrated Christmas at Gunston Hall in 1845. At Mount Vernon, later in the 1840's, we have John Augustine Washington III's account of a livelier Christmas: "...the negroes dressed in their 'Sunday Best' with a horn, a fiddle and a tambourine, passed around the yard, and house to the Portico to give us a serenade..."⁸ 

Sources

- ¹Account ledgers reproduced in Harry E. Pratt's article "The Lincolns Go Shopping" in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* Vol. 48, No.1,p.73. 1955
- ²William Allen letter to James Madison. November 20, 1830. John Dabney Shane Manuscript Collection, RG 196, Presbyterian Historical Society. Philadelphia, PA.
- ³Parson Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of George Washington* (Philadelphia: Joseph Allen Co., 1840), p. 72.
- ⁴Benjamin Woods Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), East India Company's account records reproduced in Table IV of appendix.
- ⁵Samuel Elliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921), pp. 314-315.
- ⁶Thomas Webster, *An Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy*, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845), p. 165.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, p. 148.
- ⁸John Augustine Washington III, last of the family to own Mount Vernon, would be killed 13 September 1861 while serving as aide-de-camp to General Robert E. Lee. Reported in Lee letter to Edward C. Turner September 14, 1861 (Mss 7959, Papers of Beverly Dandridge Tucker, Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia). The excerpt in text above is from a letter to his mother, Jane Charlotte Blackburn Washington December 28, 1849. (Manuscript RM-732/4926, Adelia Henry collection of Wash-


ington family manuscripts, 1831-1861; typescript, Notebook 17-c, Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.)

With many thanks to John T. Frey, Clerk of Fairfax Circuit Court, for permission to use the image; to Katrina Krempasky of Fairfax Circuit Court Historical Records for her professional guidance ; good friend Joanne Hughes for gunpowder tea clarification ; Heather Riser, Head of Reference, Small Special Collection Library, University of Virginia Library

What Is Gunpowder Tea?

Gunpowder tea comes from China. It is believed that an agent of the British East India Company gave it its name because he thought that the tightly rolled pellets resembled buckshot. The Chinese call it "Pearl Tea."

Each tea leaf is rolled into a ball and as it is infused in hot water it unfolds. It is quite beautiful. The process is called the "agony of the leaves." Formosa also produces a gunpowder tea which is sweeter and lighter than the Chinese.

It is an afternoon tea often traditionally mixed with mint especially in Morocco. It does not support milk or cream like black teas. It has a very distinctive flavor. 

—Emily Murphy, Gunston Hall docent and proprietor of Emily's Teas.



Gunpowder tea photo© soultea.de (<http://www.soultea.de/bio-gruner-tee-gunpowder-temple-of-heaven.html>), Photographer André Helbig (<http://andrehelbig.de/>)



Christmastide at Gunston Hall





Above: New citizens from around the globe are sworn in on Oct. 9. Below: the Girl Scout color guard for the immigration event prepare to present the colors. While most color guards feature armed warriors to protect the flags, this one featured a Brownie holding the hand of a Daisy. God Bless America!



From Trussing Chickens to Bugling **FALL AT GUNSTON HALL FEATURES** **WIDE VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES**

At the "Inside Out" Symposium in November, Dean Norton, Director of Horticulture at Mount Vernon, demonstrates the bugling skills he gained as a Boy Scout bugler.



Docent Diane Altenburg shares 18th-century food preservation techniques with students at Colonial Day in October. Colonial Day brought 270 4th graders from 5 schools.



Above: Archaeology volunteers dig in the garden terrace in search of evidence of George Mason's landscape. Right: at Colonial Day, younger archaeology volunteers try to piece together shards of ceramic "artifacts."



Preparing a chicken for the reflector oven in the during the Hearth Cooking class on Oct. 23.





Far left: the setting sun lights up the freshly painted columns on the landfront porch.

Near left: unless you are really looking for details, you might miss an inky fingerprint on a document in George Mason's hand. The fingerprint of Mason himself?

Looking for the Details

As that renowned historian Yogi Berra famously said, "You can observe a lot by just watching." That holds true at this historic site as you look for details that the average visitor might miss.

Far right: a single golden-yellow brick among the red.

Docents, how many times have you led school children over it? It's on the laundry floor.

Near right: who was the graffiti artist who inscribed this on the landfront porch?



On the way to the Mason family burying ground is a bench. Holding up that bench are two faces. Here's one.

What appears to be boxwood growing in an improbable place; a crevice in the eastern side of George Mason's tomb.

Rare Infights


a new feature featuring old objects

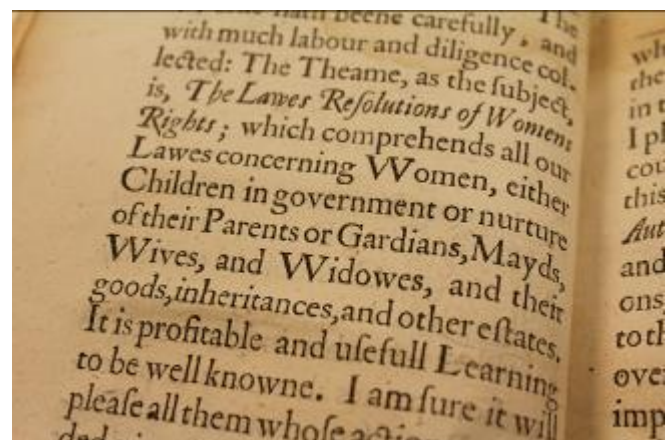
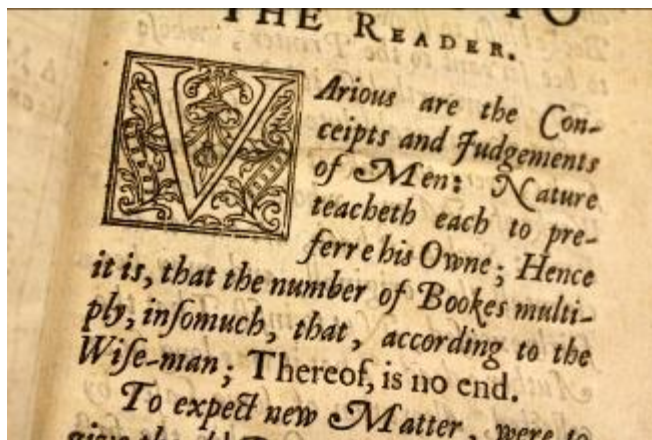
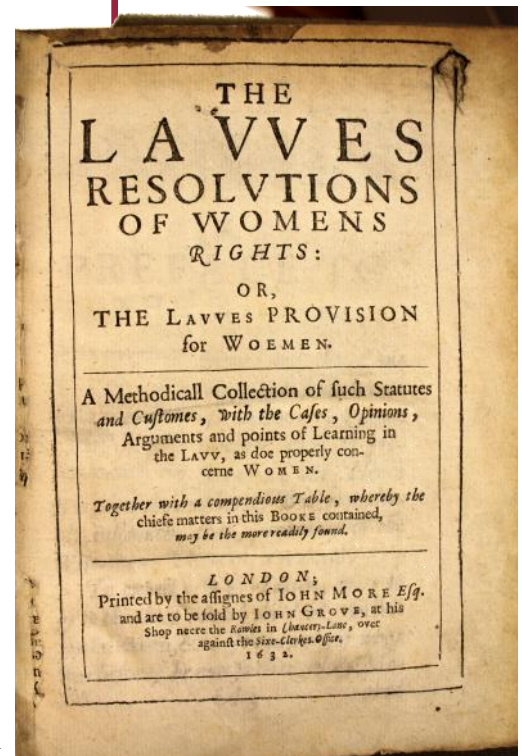
By Volunteer Library Staff

Starting with this issue of the Grapevine, volunteer library staff will be highlighting one special and unique work. Our inaugural choice is particularly relevant for such a historic women's organization as The National Society of The Colonial Dames.

This work, *The Lavves Resolution of Womens Rights: or, the Lavves Provision for Woemen*, (1632) is considered to be the first work devoted to the representation of women in English common law. This book, like many in our collection, does not necessarily represent what George Mason had in his library, but rather, his understanding of modern statutes and customs.

Mason's opinions regarding women's rights might be considered "progressive" given his interest in having his daughters well educated and provided for in his will. This is even more apparent in his careful development of "Articles of Agreement" between himself and his second wife, Sarah Brent. In it he protected the assets she already possessed, "shall be vested [...] and held by him during the Coverture [marriage]." Given no children between them, they were returned to her.

We've come a long way since then. We invite you visit this important work in the Library among the many other treasures on our shelves. 



COMING UP AT GUNSTON HALL

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Day

Gunston Hall is closed

Sunday, January 1, 2017

New Year's Day

Gunston Hall is closed

Saturday, March 4, 2017

9:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.

Archaeology Symposium:

Underwater Archaeology in the Mid-Atlantic

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

6:00p.m. - 8:00p.m.

Cocktails by Candlelight

Saturday, March 25, 2017

10:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.

Hearth Cooking for Beginners

Sunday, March 26, 2017

10:00a.m. - 4:00p.m.

Advanced Hearth Cooking





Grapeshots!

Fourth graders file into the schoolhouse for a lesson in 18th-century home schooling during a field trip on a crisp morning in December.



Lacey Villiva drains the Hearth Kitchen's "dishwasher" during October's cooking class.